

Indicator 39 (continued)

### What We Are Doing

- Working to retain forestland for its environmental, social, and economic benefits through the King County Forestry Program.
- Working to prevent the parcelization of large industrial forests.
- Encouraging forest stewardship by residential forest landowners. Providing forest stewardship workshops in cooperation with other agencies.

- Purchasing development rights through the Transfer of Development Rights Program, to prevent the conversion of forest to residential estates.
- Offering financial incentives that can benefit forest landowners, such as the Current Use Taxation Program.

### Outcome: Maintain the Quality and Quantity of Natural Resource Lands

### Indicator 40: Acres in Farmland and Number and Average Size of Farms



#### Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

"A fundamental component of the Countywide planning strategy is the maintenance of the traditional character of the Rural Area with its mix of forests, farms, high-quality natural environment....Commercial and non-commercial farming...shall be encouraged to continue and to expand as possible." (CPP FW-9. See also LU 22 - 23)

Indicator 40 monitors how well we are maintaining our agricultural resource land, in the same way that Indicator 39 monitors forest land. Fig. 40.3 looks at whether there has been any significant change in the total amount of agricultural land. Note that the minor changes in acreage are due to measurement differences rather than genuine change in the amount of farmland.

As with forest land, it is the quality of the land use that is at stake as well as the quantity. When farmland is subdivided, or farms shrink in size from other causes, it becomes difficult to sustain agriculture on them, and they are vulnerable to development for non-agricultural purposes.

King County's Agriculture Program aims to support sustainable farming, as well as to preserve and protect our remaining agricultural land.

#### Key Trends

- The number of acres in farms in King County has not changed appreciably since 1997. Although farms and farm acreage were higher during the 1980s, the current amount of farmed land is only slightly lower than in 1977.

Fig. 40.1

#### Acres of Land in Farms in King County: 1977 - 2002

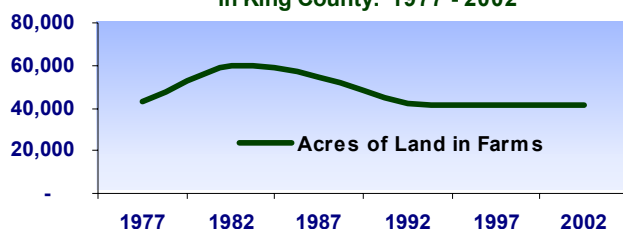


Fig. 40.2

| Total Number and Average Size of Farms in King County |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|   | 1977   | 1982   | 1987   | 1992   | 1997   | 2002*  |
| Acres in Farms  | 43,116 | 59,813 | 54,172 | 42,290 | 41,653 | 41,769 |
| Number of Farms                                       | 1,187  | 1,719  | 1,498  | 1,221  | 1,091  | 1,548  |
| Average Farm Size, in Acres                           | 36     | 35     | 36     | 35     | 38     | 27     |
| Proportion of County Land Area in Farms               | 3%     | 4%     | 4%     | 3%     | 3%     | 3%     |

\*There is a U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Census taken every 5 years. One was completed in 2002, but the methodology was changed from previous years. The higher number of farms with smaller average size is consistent with a King County survey completed in 2004.

- The proportion of the total County land area that is being farmed has remained at about 3% since 1992 - the same proportion that was being farmed in 1977.
- There are over 66,000 acres of farmland in the Agricultural Production Districts (APDs), in other agricultural-zoned land, and in active farms in the rural areas. Most, but not all, preserved agricultural land in King County is currently farmed.

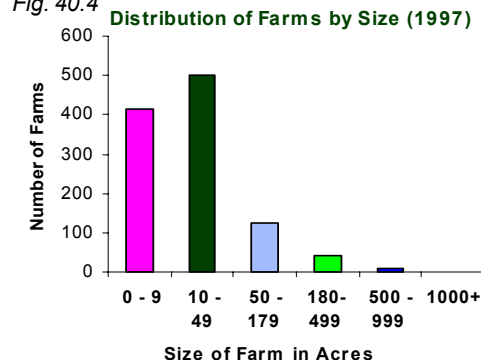
Fig. 40.3

| Acres of Farm Land in Various Categories                      |               |               |               |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|   | 1995          | 2000          | 2004*         |
| Agricultural Production District (APD)                        | 41,000        | 41,210        | 40,560        |
| Agricultural Zoned Land outside of APDs                       | 9,200         | 647           | 740           |
| Acres Farmed in Rural Areas (outside APDs or other Ag. Zones) |               | 8,675         | 25,352        |
| <b>Total Farm Land</b>  | <b>50,200</b> | <b>50,532</b> | <b>66,652</b> |

\*King County Dept. of Natural Resources conducted a survey of active farms in 2004 and found the 25,352 acres of farms in rural areas. This farm land is in addition to the agricultural-zoned land and APD's. Some (but not all) of this land is enrolled in the Current Use Taxation Program.

- Farms in King County are relatively small. About 40% of them are under 10 acres, while another 46% are between 10 and 50 acres.

Fig. 40.4



### What We Are Doing

- Preserving farm land and the viability of farms by allowing the development of small-scale processing and storage that would facilitate creation of farm cooperatives (e.g., shared commercial kitchens).

(continued on page 16)

## Metropolitan King County Countywide Planning Policies Benchmark Program

### Data Sources for Land Use Indicators

#### Indicator 30: New Housing Units in Urban and Rural Areas and Urban Centers

**Data Source:** King County Jurisdictions, Buildable Lands data collection for 1996 - 2000 and 2001 - 2003. Puget Sound Regional Council.

#### Indicator 31: Employment in Urban and Rural Areas and Urban Centers.

**Data Source:** Washington State Employment Security Department, reported by the Puget Sound Regional Council.

#### Indicator 32: Redevelopment

**Data Source:** King County Jurisdictions.

#### Indicator 33: Ratio of Land Consumption to Population Growth

**Data Source:** King County Buildable Land Report, King County Jurisdictions, U.S. Census 2000, the Washington State Office of Financial Management.

#### Indicator 34: Trend in Achieved Density of Residential Development

**Data Sources:** King County Buildable Lands Report (2002), King County Jurisdictions, and the Suburban Cities Association.

#### Indicator 35: Land Capacity as a Percent of Twenty-Year Household and Job Targets

**Data Source:** 2002 King County Buildable Lands Report, King County Jurisdictions and the Suburban Cities Association.

#### Indicator 36: Land with Six Years of Infrastructure Capacity

**Data Source:** No consistent data available. Puget Sound Regional Council is studying this issue, and their reports are available at [www.psrc.org/projects/growth/concur/concurrency.htm](http://www.psrc.org/projects/growth/concur/concurrency.htm)

#### Indicator 37: Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space

**Data Source:** King County Jurisdictions, King County Parks and Recreation; National Park and Recreation Association; the Washington State Office of Financial Management.

#### Indicator 38: Ratio of Jobs to Housing in King and Surrounding Counties.

**Data Source:** Washington State Employment Security Department; Puget Sound Regional Council; Washington State Office of Financial Management. U.S. Census 1980, 1990 and 2000.

#### Indicator 39: Acres in Forest Land

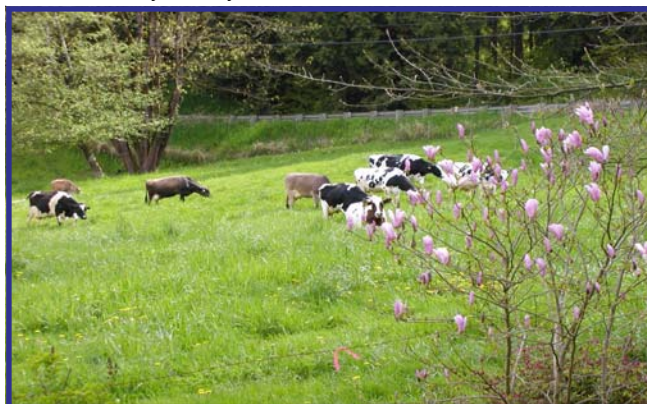
**Data Sources:** King County Department of Natural Resources.

#### Indicator 40: Acres in Farmland, and Number and Average Size of Farms

**Data Sources:** U.S. Census of Agriculture, King County Department of Natural Resources, Office of Rural and Resources Programs Farm Survey (2004).

#### Indicator 40 "What We Are Doing" (continued)

- Expanding the size and scale of farmers markets.
- Allowing farm machinery repair as an accessory use in Agriculture and Rural Zones.
- Preserving farmland by purchasing the right to develop it. About 13,000 acres are now permanently conserved for farmland.
- Partnering with retailers, including Safeway, PCC, Larry's Markets, Haggen's/Top Foods, and Metropolitan Market, who support local agriculture by buying and offering locally grown products to their customers.
- Through FarmLink, working to ensure that farms remain in agricultural production and to facilitate the transition of farms to the next generation.
- Connecting retiring farmers to new farmers, and matching landowners with underutilized land with those interested in farming.
- Working with farmers to help make agriculture both viable and environmentally friendly.



Over 13,000 acres in King County are now permanently preserved as farmland.

The **King County Countywide Planning Policies Benchmark Program** is a program of the Metropolitan King County Growth Management Planning Council. Reports on the 45 Benchmark Indicators are published annually by the King County Office of Budget. The annual reporting is accomplished through five bi-monthly publications, of which the Land Use Report is the first. It will be followed by reports on Economic, Housing, Transportation and Environmental Indicators. A companion to these reports is the **King County Annual Growth Report**. All reports are available on the Internet at <http://www.metrokc.gov/budget/>. For information about the **Benchmark Program**, please contact Rose Curran, Program Manager (206) 205-0715, FAX (206) 296-3462; e-mail: [rose.curran@metrokc.gov](mailto:rose.curran@metrokc.gov). The Benchmark Program address is King County Office of Budget, Room 420, King County Courthouse, Seattle, WA 98104.

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